

# THE NEW IMPERIAL CHALLENGE

*PANITCH, LEO  
GINDIN, SAM*

## **ABSTRACT**

The American empire, for so long made attractive and plausible by its insistence that it is not imperialistic, is no longer concealed. Analogies with imperial Rome abound in this context, but what is really needed is a new theory of imperialism that transcends the shortcomings of the classical Marxist theory of inter—imperialist rivalry. This is needed to help us explore the unique role that the United States has come to play in the emergence and management of a truly global capitalism through a structure of imperial power that rules with and through other formally independent states. After tracing the historical roots of this empire, from what Thomas Jefferson called the American state’s constitutional capacity to combine ‘extended empire and self—government’ to the penetration of the other advanced capitalist states and incorporation of them in its informal empire after World War Two, the essay goes on to analyze the reconstitution of American hegemony in the form of global neoliberalism after the crisis of the Bretton Woods order. The essay concludes with an analysis of the burden — and the contradictions — involved in the American state’s attempt to refashion all the world’s states so they accept the responsibility for (and are structurally adequate to) the reproduction of global capitalism today. The increasing use of coercive military and well as economic means to effect this is making American imperialism increasingly unconcealed and unattractive.